

Name: _____

Date: _____

Activity 1: An Introduction to the Keeler Tavern

Directions: Read the following introduction to the Keeler Tavern and answer the questions at the end of the worksheet.

Over three hundred years ago, Benjamin Hoyt moved from Norwalk, CT to Ridgefield. He built a small home on a farm in 1713. The farm was similar to most other homes in Ridgefield. Over the years, Benjamin and his wife Sarah expanded the house to fit their six children.

In 1769 Benjamin and Sarah's grandson, Timothy Keeler, bought the house from his uncle, David Hoyt. He was 21 years old. Timothy and his wife Esther Kellogg Keeler realized that their home was perfectly located to open a **tavern**. It was on Ridgefield's main road between Danbury and Norwalk. It was also on the **post road** connecting New York and Boston. In 1772, they opened T. Keeler's Inn, also known as Keeler Tavern.

A tavern was an important place in early America. It was often the first public building to be built in a town after the church. The tavern was a gathering place for both local people and travelers. A simple tavern offered beer, cider, and food. While Timothy would oversee selling the drinks, Esther ran the kitchen and was responsible for cooking for her family as well as the many guests. She also managed the rooms that travelers could rent.

Many of the ingredients in Esther's cooking had multiple uses. The fat from cooking meats could be used as fuel for small lamps. Some of the herbs used in soups, like oregano, could be used as medicine to lower a fever and some vegetables, like beets, could be used to dye clothe. Esther had to know how to use her gardens to care for her family and for the business of running the tavern.

Travelers could stop at taverns for **lodging**. Taverns were especially important in this role because a person did not need to travel very far before needing to stay overnight because travel by horse was so slow. A ten-mile trip required an overnight stay - and a trip from New York to Boston took 4 days!

Taverns were also important in the political life of early America. The tavern often had the largest rooms in town where community members could hold meetings. Keeler Tavern's Assembly Room may have been the place where the town voted to join the American Revolution! Women could not yet vote – so even if the vote happened in Esther's own home, she did not participate.

When you come and visit Keeler Tavern Museum & History Center you can step back in time and experience Timothy and Esther Keeler's tavern!

Questions for Review

1. Who built the first home where the Keeler Tavern is today?
2. What year did the Keeler Tavern open?
3. What are three reasons why taverns were important public places in Early America?
4. What different jobs did Timothy and Esther do to keep the tavern running?

Name: _____

Date: _____

Activity 2: Compare-Contrast Esther's Fireplaces

Directions: Look closely at the two pictures of fireplaces that Esther Keeler would have used while she lived at the Keeler Tavern. After you have looked at the pictures, answer the questions at the bottom of the worksheet.



Tap Room Fireplace



Esther's Kitchen Fireplace

QUESTIONS:

1. Describe each fireplace.
2. What do you notice is the same about the fireplaces?
3. What is different?
4. Which fireplace do you think was built later? Why do you think that?
5. What are the benefits of cooking in the later fireplace?
6. What else would you like to know about these fireplaces?

Name: _____

Date: _____

Activity 3: Introduction to Herbs

Directions: Read the following introduction to the herbs in Esther's kitchen and answer the questions at the end of the worksheet.

Timothy and Esther Keeler had a large family and ran a prosperous tavern. Esther used **herbs** for many reasons. For convenience, she planted an herb garden near her kitchen and dried herbs for winter use. Along with **spices**, Esther used herbs to flavor



vegetables and meats when she was cooking. She could boil parts of certain plants to dye fabric. She could add aromatic herbs to soap and use fresh or dried herbs to hide foul odors. Coffee and tea were luxuries that could not always be afforded but Esther could use herbs, like these chamomile flowers, to brew tea.

Perhaps most importantly, herbs were prized for their **medicinal** uses. Like most colonial housewives, Esther knew her **herb lore** for both **indigenous** plants and plants brought to America from Europe. People could use the plants medicines through brewing, as a tea, by mixing up a **poultice**, or through inhalation. For example, mint brewed as a tea could be used to relieve upset stomachs. Garlic was used as a poultice on wounds or ulcers and was considered an early **antiviral medication**.



At the Keeler Tavern, Esther's kitchen would smell wonderful from all the use of fresh and dried herbs. When you visit Keeler Tavern, Esther will introduce you to a number of different herbs that she used in her kitchen.

Questions

1. What are three potential uses for herbs?

2. What is an herb that could be used medicinally?

Name: _____

Date: _____






Activity 4: Draw an Herb Garden







Directions: Use the list of herbs below and the information you read about Esther Keeler's garden to design your own herb garden in the box below. Decide what focus you want your herb garden to have: for cooking, for medicinal purposes, to attract bees for honey? Include **at least 4** herbs. When you've finished, explain your reasons for choosing those herbs.



Explain why you chose the herbs in your garden:

Herbal medicine used in 18th Century Gardens:

Herb	Image	Uses	Symptoms it can treat	KTM&HC Garden
Chamomile		Served as a tea it has calming, soothing properties which reduce stress and anxiety. Its anti-inflammatory properties help with stomach cramps as well.	Anxiety Stress Stomach cramps	Yes
Garlic		A natural antibiotic, detoxes the body, strengthens blood vessels, and lowers blood pressure. Good for all diseases, infections, fungus, and bacteria. Thought to strengthen the body.	Blood pressure Immune system	
Honey		Alleviates a cough and sore throat so it was often used in teas. It has anti-inflammatory and antibiotic properties which help wounds heal when applied to the skin.	Sore Throat Cough Antiseptic	
Lamb's Ear		Used on battlefields for centuries as a Band Aid. Soft leaves absorb blood and help the blood to clot. Has antibacterial, antiseptic, and antibiotic properties which protect wounds from infections.	Wound dressing Bleeding Clotting	Yes
Lavender		Scent used to ease restlessness and insomnia. Plant oil used for hair loss and skin ailments like rashes when added to a balm or lotion. Is also a mosquito repellent.	Insomnia Skin Balm Bug repellent	Yes

Mint		Peppermint was made into a tea and used for stomach and intestinal problems. Also used for fevers, chills, colic, and diarrhea.	Sore tummy Fever Diarrhea	
Onion		Vegetable high in antioxidants and Vitamin C to boost immune system, relieve colds and flu. Often used in stews and soups. Skins can make red dye.	Colds Flu Dye	
Parsley		Good for fluid retention, rheumatism, gas, indigestion, and worms. Aids in thyroid, lung, stomach and kidney function so was often served with meals as a green or salad.	Worms Gas Indigestion	
Rosemary		Plant oil was used in a tonic for headaches and as a fever reducer. Stimulates the liver to produce bile which helps you digest fats from cooked meats so it was often used to flavor lamb.	Headache Fever Digestion	Yes
Thyme		Used in a tea for sinusitis, asthma, and to reduce fever, headache, colds, flu, and sore throat. Was also used to flavor meats and is said to reduce cholesterol.	Asthma Headache Colds Sore Throat	Yes
Yarrow		Reduces swelling and prevents infections in wounds. It is an antibacterial and kills bacteria in the mouth if chewed. Also can be used as a yellow-green dye.	Wounds Bad breath Bacterial infections Dye	

Name: _____

Date: _____

Activity 5: Plant Dyes and Designs

Learn to test dyes from plant materials and be resourceful just as Esther would have been. Many of the plants that were used in the 18th century are still in use today. Did you know that Aspirin was derived from white willow tree bark in the 1800s? We are always learning to use plants in new ways. Read all the instructions before starting this hands-on activity.

Ingredients and Materials:

Hammer or large spoon
Paper towels (or clean white fabric)
Hard surface (like a wooden cutting board)
Plants and flowers

Directions:

1. **Collect various plants** and flowers from your yard or kitchen. *Tip:* try culinary herbs like oregano as well as wildflowers like violets or dandelions.
2. **Dry them thoroughly.** Place a clean paper towel or white cloth on your hard surface. You can choose different colors to make a pattern or test leaves of the same color to find which works best.
3. **Gently cover** over the flowers and leaves with a second paper towel.
4. Using the hammer or the back of a spoon, **pound the leaves repeatedly for 2-3 minutes.** Notice that some plants will release a lot of color quickly while others release none. Even though lavender has a beautiful purple flower – it cannot be used as a dye! What other plants surprise you?
5. Gently peel the top paper towel off. Some of the leaves may stick to the bottom layer. Allow the leaves to dry and you will be able to brush them off.



Glossary

Antiviral Medication: medication used for treating a disease caused by a virus.

Artifact: an object made, modified, or used by humans in the past.

Herb: a seed-bearing plant that does not have a woody stem and dies after flowering.

Herb Lore: the study of the use of medicinal herbs around the world.

Historical Document: documents that contain important information about a person, place or event.

Indigenous: occurring naturally in a particular place.

Liquor: alcoholic drink.

Medicinal: having healing properties.

Post Road: a road designated for the transportation of postal mail, same as a highway.

Poultice: a soft, moist mass of material applied to the body to relieve soreness and inflammation.

Reproduction: a present-day copy of an original artifact.

Spice: an aromatic vegetable used to flavor food.

Stagecoach: a large, closed, horse-drawn vehicle formerly used to carry passengers and mail along a regular route between two places.

Tavern: a place that sold beer and other drinks to be consumed there, sometimes also serving food.

Recommended Reading

Picture Books: Our Colonial Year by Cheryl Harness, Hornbooks and Inkwells by Verla Kay

Non-Fiction: Exploring Colonial Williamsburg from A to Z by Chris Kinsley, Early American Trades Coloring Book by Peter F. Copeland, Colonial America by Mary Kay Carson

Fiction: Sign of the Beaver by Elizabeth George Speare, Ann's Story: 1747 by Joan Lowery Nixon